

Analysis of Non-conventional Indicators of Gender Relations: Evidence from Pakistan

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Since 1980 many developing countries have adopted two major macroeconomic strategies: Stabilisation and Structural Adjustment. A generally held view regarding the impact of these macroeconomic strategies is that it led to unemployment, low investment, decline in real wages, capital flight, rise in inequality and poverty. All these resulted in deterioration in living conditions of the poor in the short run.¹ In some cases, the long run benefits, if any, of these programmes are sacrificed due to the high social costs in the short run. A number of studies, examining the impact of the observed macroeconomic impact of the Structural Adjustment Policies (StAP), report mixed impact on women. For example, on the one hand, Khan (1999) found an increasing trend in feminisation of agricultural labour², and feminisation of poverty³ while Brown (1992), on the other hand, reports employment as a key factor in determining women's empowerment and argues that some aspects of economic reforms hold for improvement in the long-run. The argument is based on the assumption that greater economic role for women offers protection and that employment itself mitigates against domestic violence. However, the overall effect of structural adjustment is difficult to measure as it varies across countries, across sectors, and across individuals within a household.

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¹For details see, Bennett (1998); Iqbal (1994) Kemal (1994); Kemal *et al.* (2000); Khan (1993); Morriession (1991); Pasha *et al.* (1999); Siddiqui *et al.* (1999).

²Some studies reveal that poverty is pushing male labourer to migrate from rural areas. They go to city and town to seek work as daily wage earners and women are increasingly getting involved in agricultural activities. Since men's daily work has become precarious, women's agricultural work has become central and crucial for the survival of the family. Women are becoming factually the head of the household bearing much more burden with agricultural work now than before.

³Women have limited access to financial and natural resources, and training to run their businesses successfully. Often, they cannot travel as freely as men and are also deprived of the assets. They are at a disadvantage when competing with men who have greater access to markets and new technology.

Issue of gender-based violence is argued to be closely linked with economic security. If so, recent decline in economic activity and rise in poverty may have led to rise in gender-based violence. The issue of gender-based violence, including rape, domestic violence, murder and sexual abuse is not new across the Globe. However the countries differ in terms of acceptance, implementation of social, cultural and legislative support to control and reduce the incidence of violence against women. In this paper, after defining the context in which various terms are used, we discuss the issue of gender-based violence in Pakistan. The analysis is based on secondary data taken from various published and unpublished sources.⁴

We start with brief description of terms used in the paper. The term gender refers to the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female. In most societies, men and women differ in activities they under take, in access and control of resources, and in decision-making. In general, women as a group have less access, than men, to resources, opportunities and decision-making. These inequalities are a constraint to development because they limit the ability of women to develop and exercise their full capabilities for their own benefit and for that of the society as a whole.

After an intensive literature review we find that the concept underlying “non-conventional indicator” is elusive and therefore difficult to translate. From day to day observation, we are convinced that a combination of various indicators such as mobility, decision-making within and outside household, discrimination in relationship, violence and security issues, etc., form the “non-conventional indicators” of gender empowerment.

According to Bari (1994); Gelles and Strans define violence as an “act with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person”. Feminists argue that this is a narrow view of violence as it does not encompass many other forms of violence inflicted on women like sexual, psychological, emotional and verbal abuse, and the threat of violence from the male within and outside family. According to UN-Declaration of 1993, violence is: “It results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or sufferings to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”. Heise, *et al.* (1994), reports that violence against women and girls includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economical abuse and it is mainly the result of women’s subordination status in the society. These studies conclude that all traditions and customs depriving women of their liberty should be treated as act of violence.

Violence against women is rooted in the social relation of patriarchy, which is based on a system of male domination and female subordination.⁵ Slapping, hitting, punching, and kicking are hardly considered violence. Furthermore the strong notion of the privacy of the family and lack of information on the issue makes it difficult to assess the extent of the problem and to suggest effective solutions in many societies.

⁴The survey (own)-based analysis is part of the report of the Gender Planning Network.

⁵Exploitation and oppression.

Any attempt to deal with the issue of violence is critical to understand and recognise the status of women and gender relations in the society. The ecological framework, presented in Figure 1, shows that a combination of personal, community and social variables determine the incidence of gender-based violence in a society. At each level, a multitude of characteristics can help us to understand the causes and possible solutions to control gender-based violence. From this framework, it is obvious that understanding the issue of violence is not easy. At the individual level the causes could vary from the childhood environment of the individual perpetrator to current living status. Moreover, the attitude of the victim to seek social and legal support also plays an important role. Similarly, at the social level the reasons vary from the social rigidity regarding the gender role to laws legal issues in case of crime against women. Thus, the discrimination on the basis of sexual difference, and the patterns of violence initially found in the family structure, are represented within the characteristics and response of the community, the work place, the street, and the institution of the state, in, both, explicit and implicit forms. This shows that the issue of gender-based violence is complex and remedies should be specified, keeping in mind the individual-community-social interaction and response to gender violence. For example, in Pakistan, the process of “Islamisation” is also blamed to increase violence against women in the public and private spheres. However, it is not the religion but its misinterpretation that causes the problems about the status of women in a Muslim society. This process of Islamisation along with the declaration of United Nation ‘Decade for Women (1975–85)’ and the emergence of non government organisation (here after NGOs) emphasising the cause of women and development started playing a vital role in creating awareness about gender issues, particularly gender-based violence in the society after mid-1980s. [see Pakistan (1995)].

In this paper, before discussing the issue of gender violence, we discuss the issue of women empowerment (decision-making) in Section 1. In Section 2 we discuss the evidence on various forms of gender-based violence, based on information gathered from secondary sources.⁶ Conclusions are in Section 3.

1. WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

Table 1 shows that the gender based development indicator and gender empowerment measure vary across countries of South Asia. For Pakistan, both indicators are below the average for South Asian countries. This shows the limited role of Pakistani women in the economic development, access to social services and in decision-making within and outside household, relative to women in other countries of the region.

⁶The data are often underestimated as the social and cultural norms discourage reporting of such incidents.

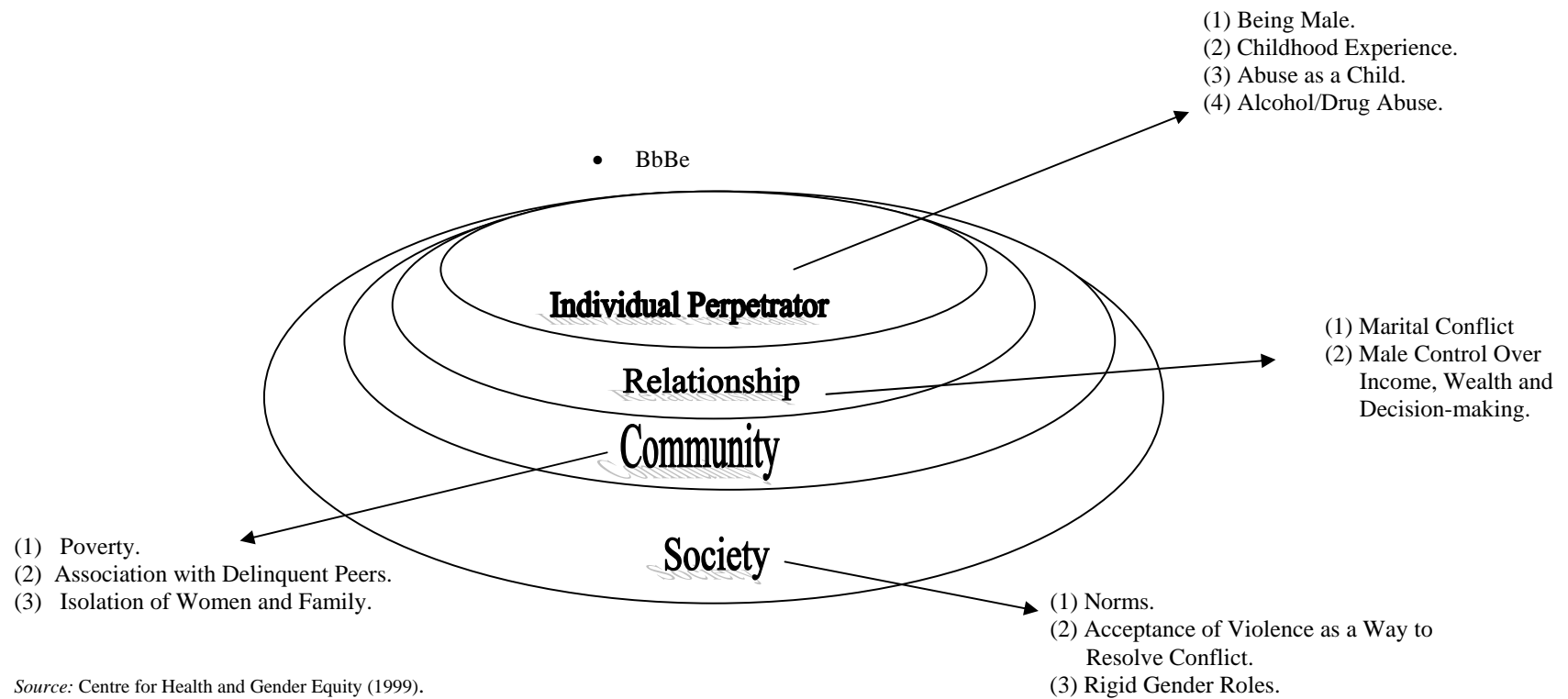


Fig. 1. Ecological Framework.

Table 1
Indicators of Gender Status in South Asia

Countries	Gender Related Development Indicator (GDI)	Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)
Bangladesh	0.428	0.304
Bhutan	0.444	–
India	0.525	0.24
Maldives	0.711	0.342
Nepal	0.441	–
Pakistan	0.472	0.176
Sri Lanka	0.712	0.321
South Asia (Weighted Average)	0.511	0.236

Source: Mahbubul Haq Human Development Centre (2000).

This lower status, discriminatory environment and the gender-based violence affect women productivity in the household, in the market place, their reproductive health and their sexual well-being. For example, Heise *et al.* (1994) show that gender-based violence creates health hazard which results in 58 millions years of total DALYs' to women in the age group 15–44. Furthermore 6 percent of this loss is attributed to domestic violence and rape. Thus, it is important to examine the impact of violence on the life of women and of those who abuse them. It is also important for designing the policy to intervene and reduce violence.

The meaning of women's empowerment is understood very differently by development practitioners, policy-makers, and by women activists. Better education, employment and increased role in decision making in the general public and private sectors are usually quoted as necessary condition for empowering women. So to study we should look at women's empowerment in various dimensions. In this section, we are concentrating only on economic and political empowerment of Pakistani women.

Economic Empowerment

Economic Empowerment is critical in empowering women socially at domestic level and to create opportunities for women's success. When women control their livelihood the whole family benefits. Studies have shown that when women have their own income or have control over household income more money is spent on food and on children's education and health. If we take the degree of involvement of women in day-to-day decision-making, as measure of female

Table 2

Indicators of Women's Empowerment (Percentage)

Decision	Consulted	Major Decision-maker
Purchase of Food	71.2	51.2
Number of Children	65.1	15.6
Schooling of Children	53.3	17.3
Marriage of Children	51.5	6.8
Major Household Purchases	16.5	4.6
Women's Work Outside Home	38.5	14.5
Sale and Purchase of Livestock	20.8	4.6

Source: Sathar and Kazi (1997).

empowerment, then the highest percentage of women ever consulted is for the purchase of food. Table 2 also reports that only 51 percent of the women reported being major buyer of food. Less than 70 percent of these women are consulted about the number of children, their education and marriage and less than 20 percent are consulted for the purchase of asset. This is not a surprising result [see Sathar and Kazi (1997)]. Women in Pakistan continue to face gender bias and they are constantly subjected to legal, economic and social discrimination.

Political Empowerment

Can women use their vote to increase the number in public life and create pressure group at various levels to influence official decision-making. Further more can women take action collectively and individually by using their economic power as workers, consumers, voters, managers, executive and entrepreneurs? In Pakistan a women can become a Prime Minister, but in general women have been excluded from the main stream of national politics. Constitutionally, no restrictions are placed on women's political participation but their representation in political parties and political institutions at the local, provincial and national levels is negligible.

The women are under-represented at all levels of the political system. The provision of reserved seats for women in the assemblies lapped before the 1990 elections. These reserved seats for women have not been restored, despite numerous promises. Recently at the local bodies level there have been promises and assurances from the GOP that the representation of women will increase by 33 percent at the local level. However with a series of new ordinances even the existing reserved seats for women in rural Punjab have been withdrawn.

2. FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence can take many forms like physical abuse, mental and psychological abuse, and others. In this study, we concentrate on three forms of gender-based violence, physical abuse, psychological abuse and economic abuse. It is difficult to make a clear distinction between these forms of violence as one form creates multidimensional impact. For example, physical violence also results in mental and psychological distress. Economic abuse can cause physical and psychological distress. According to MHDC (2000), domestic violence occurs in every third household and up to 80 percent of women in Pakistan are subject to different forms of domestic violence in Pakistan.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes intimidation, wife beating, burning, rape, murder, sexual harassment and forced prostitution and honour killing. Based on fifty population-based surveys around the world, Centre for Health and Gender Equity (1999) reports that from 10 to over 50 percent of women in the sample were hit or physically harmed by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives. The study also reports that in a number of countries, including Pakistan, violence is viewed as physical chastisement—the husband's right to "correct" an erring wife. According to Sathar and Kazi (1997), the intimidation is common in the rural Punjab as about 82 percent of the wives report that they are "afraid to disagree with husband". According to Human Right Commission of Pakistan's Report (1999) the violence may lead to death of the victim and the major cause of physical violence is unemployment of the male partners.

(a) Wife Beating

Wife beating is fairly common phenomenon across countries, including Pakistan, even among the educated and economically privileged classes. This violence frequently takes the form of torture, mutilation and murder. According to MHDC (2000), wife beating resulting in bettered housewives takes place in approximately 80 percent of the households in Pakistan. In urban areas 55 percent and in rural areas 35 percent women are facing this abuse. The study by Sathar and Kazi (1997) also shows that wife beating is common in rural Punjab as about 35 percent of the women report that they have been beaten by their husbands and 7 percent of them are beaten regularly. In general, the studies on gender issues seem to suggest that age contributes positively to women empowerment but it does not seem to discourage wife-beating, as about 52 percent of women above age 34 years report that husbands beat them and 8 percent of these women report regular beating. However, education seems to be an important factor in controlling domestic violence (see Table 3).

Table 3

Domestic Violence by Education of Respondents (Percentage)

Education (Years)	Afraid to Disagree with Husband	Often Afraid to Disagree with Husband	Ever Beaten by Husband	Husband Beats them Regularly
0	83.3	31.7	36.8	7.9
1–5 years	79.6	23.1	29.9	4.1
> 8 years	69.6	12.5	14.3	3.6
All	82.0	28.0	34.6	7.1

Source: Sather and Kazi (1997).

The data reported in Table 4 shows that cases of wife beating increased from 42 in 1989 to 198 in 1998. This shows more than 4-times increase in incidence of wife beating. However, this rise may be a reflection of increased awareness and better reporting about the incidents of wife beating. The Human Rights Commission's Report (1999) indicates that 400 cases of wife beating were reported and in 50 percent of the cases the victims died. This shows that issue of wife beating does not end at beating only, but it turns into killing the victims also.

Table 4

Incidence of Physical Abuse

	Domestic Violence				Social Violence	
	Wife Beating	Incest/ Rape	Burnt Victims	Forcing Wife to Earn as Prostitute	Violence	Child Labour
1989	42	2	2	2	0	12
1990	77	6	5	0	3	11
1991	77	11	6	6	6	20
1992	89	16	3	3	6	13
1993	120	12	2	2	8	14
1994	160	13	215	3	12	16
1995	200	22	198	6	10	21
1996	400	39	219	2	9	15
1997	198	7	165	0	6	18
1998	–	19	239	–	9	33

Source: From data files of Progressive Women's Association.

(b) Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment at work place and on the street takes many forms. At work place it includes sexual proposition, vulgar posters, lewd songs, scurrilous jokes, and "accidental" touching. Further in the more serious cases, rights, benefits, promotions and job security are offered or withheld on the basis of sexual favours granted. Sexual violence at the work place is largely class based. For example, nurses are the target at hospitals, domestic workers at homes, factory workers and women working as bonded labour at their respective work place.

In the street, it ranges from the more common instances of verbal abuse, sexist remarks, accidental pushing and shoving and exhortations to cover the hair, to forcible cutting of hair. Further in some extreme cases, stabbing and acid burning. This form of violence is justified on the ground that women's "right" place is home. Even though, one routinely reads about such incidences in newspapers, but any documentary proof is seldom available as the victims do not report it because of shame and social norms.

(c) Rape

The occurrence of the crime has increased over time. It is used as a mean of revenge, not only in public places but also in homes, in front of family members. Human Rights Commission (1999) reports that, "according to official statistics at least one rape a day has been reported in Punjab alone and one every six hours in the country." In the past rape was used, by those in power, as an effective mean to silence dissent and opposition. President of Human Rights Council of Pakistan said in a press conference that in the year 1995, 3000 women were raped, in which 32 women were tortured and five of them died. Forty percent of the victims were minor girls. As many as 2000 women were gang raped, over 300 burnt alive or hanged, and 250 stripped and force to dance in the streets.⁷ Thirty percent of these victims were under 11 years of age, while 32 percent were in the age group of 12 to 17 years.

A close look at the circumstances reveals more details of grievous nature. A women's distress gets worse when she is raped and in order to prove her case in courts, she has to produce four persons as witness who have "seen" her raped, which eliminates any possibility of legal support for the victims. Based on a survey of hospitals in Rawalpindi and Islamabad in 1999, Reports show that violence against women is rising. About 50 percent of victims of domestic violence died. Other indicators also show rising trend. The concept of marital rape is alien in Pakistan and it is not recognised as a category of violence. Furthermore, disable women and girls are less able to protect themselves, are especially vulnerable to all forms of violence including neglect, less access to food and education health care, rape and incest. They are also often subjective to unjustified forced sterilisation.

(d) Murder/Women-Burning

Over the past decade or so murder/attempted murder by stove burning has become quite common. Table 4 shows that after 1993, the number of burnt victims increased from 2 in 1993 to 215 in 1994. The rise is clearly a result of better reporting and increased awareness among the victims and in the society.

⁷According to the Human Rights Commission's Report, the number of rape cases is estimated to be around 12000, based on the assumption that almost one-fourth of such incidents are reported. The total number of incidents reported in 1995 was 3000.

A six-month survey, conducted by Progressive Women's Organisation in 1994, of two hospitals in cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad revealed a total 300 women were raped and burnt alive resulting in 89 cases where murder was suspected. Indicative of marital violence and affecting the economically underprivileged, these cases of murder and women burning are rarely pursued, nor the victims are given adequate medical facilities/treatment (see Table 5). Table 5, based on survey of burnt victims in the hospital in Rawalpindi shows that majority of the husbands of burnt victims are either unemployed or unskilled workers. Similarly, dowry demand is the leading cause of wife burning. Further, husbands and in-laws are the leading suspects in the cases of wife burning.

(e) Forced Prostitution

Force prostitution and trafficking women are forms of violence for profit. The Pakistani women are subjected to it, but it is difficult to quantify it due to lack of data. Apart from their systematic physical, sexual and psychological abuse and economic exploitation at the hand of pimps and police are also cited in different cases. The most alarming issue is when the husbands are forcing the wives to work as prostitutes (see Table 4).

(f) Public Humiliation

This includes family vendetta cases where women were publicly stripped naked and dragged through the streets. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported that, in Punjab, the number of incidents of public humiliation nearly doubled as the number of reported incidents increased from 48 in 1993 to 92 in 1994.

(g) Honour Killings

Honour killing, rooted in the patriarchal perception of the women's body as the repository of male/family honour, takes many forms. Cutting across all age groups and on mere suspicion of adultery or illicit sexual relations, social attitudes tend to exonerate the murder, or at least view him sympathy. Often women become victims of male machinations of their own tribes or group, where allegations of adultery against them and male members of the rival group levelled merely as a vendetta and the female victim being considered expendable.

In Pakistan, as in other male dominated societies, a girl often is married off shortly after puberty and to a man of her parent's choice. Choosing a husband of her own can be deadly for women in Pakistan. Where girls have been hacked to death, shot or strangled for defying their parents' choice is considered a shame full act that disgraces the family. These crimes have been labelled honour killing. According to Human Rights Commission watch the number of honour killings have increased in Pakistan, The data collected from various sources, reported in Table 6, also shows

Table 5

Characteristics of Burnt Victims

Characteristics	Number of Cases	Percentage of Total
1. Percentage Burnt		
<80 percent	69	8
80–89	32	29
90–99	54	17
100	15	37
Total Information	170	92
No Information	15	8
2. Marital status		
Unmarried	15	8
Married	170	92
Married and pregnant	22	12
3. Age		
15 Years	4	2
16–20	87	47
21–25	75	41
26–35	4	2
4. Occupation		
Unemployed	16	9
Unskilled	28	15
Semiskilled	17	9
Others	124	67
5. Attitude of Parental Family		
Norm of the Society should Submit	74	40
Not our Problem	37	20
Jirga Force to Go Back	25	14
Others	49	26
6. Dominant Family Problem		
Demand of Dowry/Financial Help	30	16
Husband Addict /Gabbler	27	15
Improper Sexual demands by Husband	24	13
Husband Cruel and Suspicious	17	9
Others	87	47
7. Number of Children of Victims		
No Child	12	6
1 Child	68	37
2-3 Children	13	7
4-5 Children	14	8
5 + Children	2	1
No Information	76	41
8. Suspected Accused		
Husband	90	49
In-laws	32	17
Husband and In-laws	11	6
Others	52	28

Source: Progressive Women's Association, "Trial by Fire". (year of publication not reported).

Table 6

Honour Killing in Pakistan—by Provinces

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Punjab						
Number of Cases—Registered	340	320	363	358	359	1740
—Challaned	337	319	348	358	349	1711
Number of Accused—Involved	494	495	540	521	543	2593
—Arrested	416	407	444	440	446	2153
Sindh						
Number of Cases—Registered	125	161	129	151	161	727
—Challaned	119	159	123	147	153	701
Number of Accused—Involved	263	402	382	346	309	1702
—Arrested	191	280	252	246	231	1200
North West Frontier Province						
Number of Cases—Registered	48	51	56	54	83	292
—Challaned	45	50	55	53	75	278
Number of Accused—Involved	76	78	85	71	121	431
—Arrested	60	64	70	62	98	354
Balochistan						
Number of Cases—Registered	39	45	32	48	52	216
—Challaned	36	39	29	44	47	195
Number of Accused—Involved	55	63	45	75	96	334
—Arrested	46	51	37	60	71	265
Islamabad						
Number of Cases—Registered	1	0	0	2	3	6
—Challaned	1	0	0	2	0	3
Number of Accused—Involved	1	0	0	2	3	6
—Arrested	1	0	0	2	0	3
Northern Areas						
Number of Cases—Registered	7	8	5	13	12	45
—Challaned	7	8	5	13	12	45
Number of Accused—Involved	7	8	5	13	14	47
—Arrested	7	8	5	13	13	47
Total Pakistan						
Number of Cases—Registered	560	585	585	626	670	3026
—Challaned	545	575	560	617	636	2933
Number of Accused—Involved	896	1046	1057	1028	1086	5113
—Arrested	721	810	808	823	859	4021

Source: Data files of various related Departments.

rising trend in honour killing. The table also shows that all the reported cases were not challenged and in most cases only 2/3 of the accused were arrested. How many of them were convicted is not reported any where.

Psychological and Mental Abuse

The psychological and mental abuse of women comes in many guises and pervades all area of their lives. This form of abuse is inherent in all socio cultural institutions. The focus on female reproductive, along with the high value placed on female chastity, pushes the girl child into an early marriage and child bearing before her mind and body is fully mature. The forced marriage or the child-hood marriages also result into domestic violence. In addition to physical abuse, many other actions at the domestic and community level may cause mental distress. It can take the form of “not allowing wife to visit her parents”, forced marriage, abduction of children, second marriage and others. Table 7 shows that the cases reported in each case are increasing over time. For example, in 1989 only 39 cases were reported where husbands did not allow the wives to visit parents and it increased to 302 in 1998. Similarly, the incidents of child abduction increased from 32 in 1989 to 180 in 1996. Despite presence of family laws, the number of reported second marriages increased. This shows an overall increase in reporting and incidence of actions leading to psychological and mental abuse.

In general, cultural practices and age-old traditions deny the majority of the women in Pakistan the right to choose their marriage partners, or to reject the one chosen for them or to remain single if they want to. As a divorced mother, women are often forcefully deprived of her child, since both law and custom designate the father as the natural guardian.

Table 7

Incidence of Psychological Abuse

Year	Psychological Abuse			
	Not Allowed to Visit Parents	Forced Marriage	Father Abduct Children from Wife	Second Wife
1989	39	3	32	20
1990	44	5	40	38
1991	60	10	36	46
1992	52	13	48	29
1993	70	10	61	61
1994	85	12	70	81
1995	99	9	130	38
1996	200	16	180	47
1997	111	6	60	29
1998	302	161	—	—

Source: Data files of Progressive Women's Association.

The divorce laws, not only cause mental anguish but they also make women susceptible to blackmail and compromise. Customs, particularly in the rural areas, often deprive women of their share in the family property, which is distributed among the male members of the family. In some parts of Sindh province, 'marriage to the Quran', which permanently denies a women her right to marriage, ensures that her property remains within the natal family. In Pakistan, marriage and motherhood are perceived as women's sole destiny and duty. The single women is seen as an economic and social liability and often denied both her property rights and the recognition of her productivity. The mental abuse is the leading cause of suicide among the victims. (See Tables 8).

Table 8

Reasons for Suicide in Karachi and Rawalpindi

Reasons	Number of Cases in Karachi		Number of Cases in Rawalpindi
	Males	Females	Total
Unemployment	18	0	5
Poverty	1	0	—
Financial Problems	4	1	—
Office Problem	1	0	—
Depression	2	1	—
Domestic Problems	5	7	13
Sickness	1	1	2
Mentally Sick	1	0	13
Others	2	2	18
Total	35	12	51 (39)[12]

Source: Sarfraz Ahmed, "Most Suicides due to Sense of Insecurity, Alienation", *Dawn*, Wednesday, July 19, 2000. M. Asghar, "Record Rise in Suicide Cases", *THE NEWS*, July 14, 2000.

Note: The number in parenthesis is for males and in brackets for females.

Economic Abuse

Economic abuse, in the form of not providing for the livelihood, is a common form of abuse by the husbands or the male heads of the household. It may be the most prevalent form of abuse at the domestic level. The data reported in Table 9 also indicate presence of this form of violence.

Table 9

Economic Abuse

	No Khurcha (no Money)
1989	40
1990	70
1991	60
1992	79
1993	88
1994	100
1995	80
1996	97
1997	41
1998	—

Source: Data files of Progressive Women's Association.

Institutional Violence

The legal system, the law-enforcement system, and the media are some of the major means through which the state maintains its power. In the past fifteen years discriminatory laws, attitude of law enforcing agencies, along with the exploitation of religion to control women's sexuality and productivity, have been instrumental in increasing violence in women's lives. The Hudood Ordinance deals with the issues of extra marital sex and rape. In the absence of sufficient evidence for a conviction of rape, a women who registers case of rape can, because of her own admission, be prosecuted for adultery while a rapist can be free for lack of evidence.

The law of evidence (1984) renders women's testimony legally inferior and propagates the formula of a man equal to two women. The Qiaas and Diyat Ordinance (1991) introduce the concept of retribution on the basis of eye for an eye. It fixes the price of a human life arbitrarily and provides legal sanction to the practice of reducing women to commodities to settle disputes and feuds.

A large number of women around the world are subjective to injustice, discrimination and intimidation. In a country like Pakistan, not only the inequities remain, the legal status of women is deliberately diminished. Many inequities stem from socio cultural conditions and lack of legal safeguards, and lack of will to implement the legislative provisions regarding women.

According to 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, no discrimination against women and children is allowed. However, these fundamental rights remained suspended after the imposition of Marshall-law in 1978. Labour laws exist to ensure equal opportunity of employment. The Maternity Benefits Act implemented in 1960s covers the women working in factory. Under these Acts, the employer is liable to

provide leave and monetary benefits to the women workers. The employer cannot fire her during her maternity leave. However, to enjoy the benefits of this Act, the women should be employed in the factory for a period of not less than nine months. The women are entitled to receive the maternity benefits at the rate of her daily earnings. Non-compliance by the employer can result in imposition of a (nominal) penalty up to Rs 250. The Minimum Wage Legislation of 1962, explicitly states that "...in fixing minimum wage rate the principle of equal remuneration for men and women worker for work of equal value shall be applied".

In case of disability payment, if medical examination of women is needed, than no women shall be medically examined, without her consent, by a male practitioner. The examination shall be in the presence of another woman.

However, these labour laws do not give any legal cover to women workers in the informal sector, and a high proportion of women are working in the informal sector. Thus, there is an urgent need to ensure proper implementation of law and to bring changes in the laws to cover informal sector of employment.

3. CONCLUSION

The evidence presented in this paper shows that violence against women has increased in the decade of 1990s. The main reason for the crime/violence is identified as economic hardships, and domestic and community pressures. The rise in unemployment rate, can be identified as leading cause of gender violence. Furthermore, controlling violence requires efforts at the domestic, community and national level. Furthermore, the individual and social characteristics play an important in the gender-based violence.

Since, in most cases, women depend emotionally and financially on the abusers, it becomes critical how women experience violence and how to intervene to reduce gender-based violence effectively. Lack of technical competence and resources, cultural stereotypes, negative social attitude, institutional constraints, and women's reluctance to disclose violence are the major barriers in controlling violence. Thus, in order to reduce gender-based violence, there is a need to empower women, raise cost to abusers, provide for the need of victim, reach out to abusers and other men, provision of effective legal cover and creating awareness in the community.

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